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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, March 18, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject; "SPRING BRINGS PLENTY OF EGGS FOR COOKING." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Today, the approach of spring has inspired me to talk about eggs and egg cookery. Longer days --crocuses on the lawn--the family almanac--all point to the fact that spring will soon be with us.

In a short while human beings will be getting their usual spring fever--want to do things like write poetry -- go fishing -- spade up the garden -- or just sleep. But not the feathered creatures -- the birds in the air and the stay-down-on-the-earth hens. With them it's a season of most serious activity.

Soon the robin will have a nest half way up in the elm tree. In it will be four pale blue eggs. Mrs. Turtle Dove will be sitting in her shallow nest concentrating on two white eggs. And the saucy brown Thrasher will be bragging about the five gray and brown creations in that nest in the lilac bush.

But down on earth -- the hens the nation over are already starting on their annual upswing in egg production. For its their custom during the months of March--April--May--and June to lay as many eggs as they do all the other eight months of the year put together.

So far this season, since last November, egg supplies have been considerably above average. And egg prices have been low. Now that the hens are going into four months of even greater egg laying activity, it's a good time to get out the egg recipes and to give the family some special egg dishes.

The list of egg dishes includes a number of treats. There are airy souffles that actually do melt in your mouth. There are sponge cakes and custards; fruit whips--omelets--and almost unending possibilities for using eggs.

But whichever of these egg dishes you are making or if you are cooking eggs by themselves there is one thing to watch above all else. That is the temperature. Eggs and egg dishes take a slow, constant temperature for cooking if they are to be tender and good to eat.

For cooking purposes, the most valuable part of an egg is its protein. This protein has special properties--properties that make it useful to us in thickening mixtures such as custards--or in leavening cakes--or in clarifying cloudy soups. Because of the protein, we may use eggs to bind the materials together in croquettes and form a permanent emulsion such as mayonnaise.

But it's this same valuable protein that requires our special attention when we cook it. Heat the eggs slowly, evenly at a moderate temperature and all is well. The eggs are tender when they're done. But let the temperature get high or let eggs cook too long--then you have something that's tough and stringy.

One of the most effective of all the ways of regulating temperature is to cook the egg mixture in a pan of water. Use a moderate oven for custards, souffles, and baked eggs. But keep the heat constant and regular by setting these mixtures in pans of hot water while they cook.

The double boiler serves the same purpose on top of the stove. It keeps the heat low and constant for puddings and custards. When custards are cooked in a double boiler the water in the lower part of the utensil is kept just below the boiling points.

It's the same story with the other methods of egg cookery. Use a low heat and a heavy pan for omelets. Get the skillet moderately hot, then have the heat low for frying eggs.

Drop eggs to be poached into a shallow pan of boiling, salted water. Then reduce the heat immediately so that the water stops boiling. The high starting temperature and the salt in the water makes the eggs "set" quickly.

One of the simplest and most versatile of all cooked eggs is the one that has been hard-cooked in its shell. This may be used to garnish vegetables--served with salads--combined with a curry sauce--or in any of a number of other ways.

Here's one way to cook eggs so that they have a uniform texture and aren't tough next to the shell. Start them in cold water. Heat until the water gets just below boiling point. At this temperature they'll take about thirty minutes to cook.

When they're done drop them in cold water immediately. This will do two things. First it'll make the eggs easier to get out of the shell. And it'll help prevent the formation of a dark green substance that sometimes is present where the yolk and white of the egg come together.

So much for egg cookery. Here's a condensed version of the story of the food value of the egg. The following answer "present" to a roll call of the nutrients in eggs.

Answering loudest of all are iron--protein--vitamin A--and phosphorus. Answering in weaker voices, but very much present just the same are calcium and vitamins B, G, and D.

The iron in eggs is especially important because it's one mineral that our diets often lack. The protein of eggs is the efficient kind that we need in the structure of our body tissues.

And now let me repeat the special egg news that started this talk--during the spring months hens are laying more eggs than they do all the rest of the year. Egg supplies are high--egg prices low. And as always eggs rate ace-high in food value.

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